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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to discover what the sources of stress are for a reference librarian working in a public library; other objectives included finding out how reference librarians manage stress and identifying their sources of job satisfaction. The study looked at many possible stress factors indicated in the literature review, such as the introduction of new technology, increased threats of censorship, funding problems, demands for additional services, and the current opinion that the library will become obsolete. The survey used a purposive sample consisting of 101 reference librarians in public libraries in Lake, Cuyahoga, and Geauga counties, Ohio. Patrons were identified as the most frequent source of stress (by 35.6% of respondents); 97% thought patrons appreciate their help; 99% said that their libraries provide training on new technology; 97% had good relationships with their supervisors; 98% were permitted to provide input into departmental decisions. With regard to relieving stress, 44.6% relieved stress by reading; 56.4% felt satisfaction from answering reference questions; and 76.2% would choose the same career if starting over. It is concluded that, although more stress management services are needed, the job satisfaction reported outweighed the stress. Recommendations for further research are included. The cover letter and questionnaire are appended. (Author/DLS)

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ED 424 865

AN ANALYSIS OF STRESS ASSOCIATED WITH REFERENCE WORK IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library
and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Holly Carter Ferkol
April 1, 1998

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ABSTRACT

This study was constructed to discover what the sources of stress are for a reference librarian working in a public library; other objectives included finding out how reference librarians manage stress and identifying their sources of job satisfaction.

The study looked at many possible stress factors indicated in the literature review, such as the introduction of new technology, increased threats of censorship, funding problems, demands for additional services, and the opinion now being expressed that the library will become obsolete.

A survey was used for this study. The survey used a purposive sample, since reference librarians were specifically chosen to participate in this study. The sample consists of 101 reference librarians.

The majority (35.6%) of the respondents thought patrons cause them the most stress. Some other results were 97% of the respondents felt patrons appreciated their help and 99% of the respondents said their library does provide training on new technology. Also, 97% of the respondents said they had a good relationship with their supervisor and 98% said they were permitted to provide input into decisions made in their department.

With regards to relieving stress, 44.6% of the respondents said they

relieved stress by reading and with regards to job satisfaction, 56.4% of the respondents felt satisfaction from answering reference questions. Respondents in this survey revealed that patrons provide them with the most job satisfaction. The most positive finding in this study was that 76.2% of the respondents said if they were beginning their career today they would choose to be reference librarians working in a public library.

Master's Research Paper by
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B.S., Lake Erie College, 1991

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

The word stress has a negative connotation, yet it is something that everyone experiences. Dr. Hans Selye states "stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it" (Selye 1974, 14). Under such a definition, it is impossible to live without stress. If it is managed well, stress can act as a motivator for a person. The key to coping with stress successfully is using stress management techniques, such as reference librarians sharing their views on the stress that they experience on the job. Other stress management techniques include learning how to say no to extra projects that you don't have time for, and determining how much work you can complete in a day rather than focusing on the pile of work to be done, that never seems to decrease in size. If stress is poorly managed, it can cause emotional and physical problems.

When there is more stress in a work environment people do not want to come to work, turnover may increase, and workers may feel annoyed and unwilling to cooperate - which will lower productivity (Bube 1985). Administrators need to analyze the stress their librarians are experiencing; they need to improve the working environment so that their

librarians will want to remain, feel more fulfilled in their position, and be more productive. Since stress is such an important issue in libraries, research should be done to acquire additional information on this topic.

Librarians have experienced stress for years, but the level of stress appears to have increased because of a number of factors. Some of the factors causing an increased level of stress are the introduction of new technology, increased threats of censorship, funding problems that have continued to plague libraries, demands for additional services, and the opinion now being expressed that libraries will become obsolete.

Stressors should be identified so they can be properly managed. Identifying the sources of stress that are unique to reference librarians working in public libraries is the first step in creating a healthy working environment. Making the work environment stress free is not possible. By identifying difficult situations for reference librarians, stress management techniques can be implemented and make a difference.

The level of stress in libraries will continue to rise in the future, if not properly understood and managed. Generally, coping techniques include removing oneself from stressful situations, limiting the amount of stressors you experience, acquiring additional resources to meet demands, and altering the way you perceive the situation (Hodges 1990). Making reference librarians the focus of this study is an obvious choice since the

reference librarian assists patrons in accessing information, one of the most important functions of the public library. In the past, research has been done on stress in the public library, but not specifically on reference librarians working with adults.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study is to learn what the causes of stress are for a reference librarian working in a public library. Other objectives include finding out how librarians manage stress and identifying their sources of job satisfaction. This paper will attempt to determine if there is a correlation between the various factors.

Definitions of Terms

Stressors: Anything that brings on stress (Selye 1974).

Distress: Stress that is damaging (Selye 1974).

Eustress: "Pleasant or curative stress" (Selye 1976, 466).

Burnout: "A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind" (Maslach1982, 3).

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to reference librarians working with adults in Lake, Cuyahoga, and Geauga counties. This study does not apply to all professions, but only to reference librarians. There are a number of different types of workers in a library. There is no basis to believe that the stressors that reference librarians experience are the same for others within the same library. As the questionnaires will only be distributed in the Ohio counties of Lake, Cuyahoga, and Geauga, it would not be proper to generalize the findings to all reference librarians.

CHAPTER II.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Library Literature database was searched as well as the print form of LISA to obtain articles for the literature review.

Margaret Schneider studied stress and job satisfaction by comparing people working in public services with those working in technical services in a large public library system. The reason the study was conducted was because of growing concerns of the employees working at the library; there were not enough employees to handle the work load and it appeared that this was having a harmful effect on the workers' health (Schneider 1991). The interview and survey methods were used in the study. The Likert scale was used for the questionnaire. Someone from each position in the library system was interviewed.

The findings from the study revealed that public service employees had more duties, yet they were more satisfied with their work than employees in technical services. Technical services employees had more control over the pace of their work and did not have as many interruptions as public service employees. Schneider pointed out that lack of funding does not excuse management's poor communication with workers, failure to allow workers to participate in decision making, or poor work environment (Schneider 1991).

Charles Bunge provides the results from his stress management workshops. One objective was that people participating in the workshop acquire insights by sharing their thoughts and experiences with others (Bunge 1987). Another objective was to collect data on job satisfaction and stress. A group interview was used to collect data for the study. The subjects included people from different kinds of libraries, as well as people holding different positions in the libraries (Bunge 1987). The interview schedule included questions on job satisfaction and stress at work.

The findings revealed that different groups often had similar feelings regarding job satisfaction and stress. Catalogers revealed that they did not get recognition for their efforts, but instead received complaints regarding subject headings that were not useful and that processing was not done quickly enough (Bunge 1987). Reference librarians were stressed by their work loads and also by the fast pace of reference work.

Nathan Smith, Nancy Birch, and Maurice Marchant studied people working in the reference department of medium and large public libraries. The purpose of the study was to collect data from public reference librarians on stress, distress, and burnout. The survey method was used

to obtain demographic data and data on burnout, so that relationships could be identified. A questionnaire was used to collect the data.

The findings of the study revealed that most reference librarians working in a public library had reached a medium level of burnout (Smith, Birch, and Marchant 1984). Their findings also revealed that burnout could not be forecasted by what the librarian's gender was. Reference librarians who were married were less likely to experience burnout. Part-time librarians had lower levels of burnout than full-time librarians. There was an increased tendency for librarians to be emotionally drained and have negative feelings towards patrons as their level of education rose. Older librarians tended to be less burned out as compared to younger librarians (Smith, Birch, and Marchant 1984).

Julie Hodges stated that the usual psychological symptoms of stress involve people feeling depressed, frustrated, indifferent, or trapped (Hodges 1990). Some people may use drugs or alcohol to cope with stress.

Problems with communication will hinder job satisfaction, will not motivate workers, and will lower performance (Hodges 1990). Patrons can be a source of stress when they are abusive to librarians. Some librarians who have children experience stress due to their schedules, since it is often difficult to find someone to watch children at night or on

weekends, when libraries are usually open.

Judy Bube explains the sources of stress for librarians and the importance of the way in which they respond to stress. People handle stress in different ways. According to Bube (1985) the constant demand for accurate and meticulous work will increase the librarian's stress, along with the need to be courteous and provide service instantly to over one hundred patrons daily. Learning new skills that are needed to use a computer efficiently can also be stressful for librarians. The library could offer workers counseling to help reduce stress through either the human resources department or another department providing such services (Bube 1985).

Julita Nawe (1995) discusses the stress that librarians experience. Role conflict can cause stress because the employee has various supervisors who do not agree on what the employee should be doing. Stress is also caused by role ambiguity which is present when an employee does not know that for which he or she is responsible.

When employees do not use their skills, it can be as stressful as being overworked, since employees want to feel they have accomplished something and that they have developed new skills. Because CD-ROMs are not all designed the same, librarians may experience stress in assisting patrons because they do not have time to become an expert on each and

every system (Nawe 1995).

Shirley W. Leung (1984) discusses the stress that librarians working in technical services experience. Processing materials is one element that can become redundant, but must be done correctly for patrons to be able to use the materials. Another problem is the number of decisions that must be made regarding policies, procedures, guidelines, and practices necessary to keep the materials running through the channels. Often there are problems between technical services staff and the reference department staff for different reasons. Also patrons often provide more complaints than compliments regarding the work done by the technical services staff. Staff in technical services has to deal with budget constraints as well. Work can get backed up quickly with staff missing work, such as when they are ill or on vacations (Leung 1984).

Leung points out that there are mechanisms to help staff deal with their stress. People have to identify how to work through the situation in a constructive manner. It is important to have a positive attitude and to not take criticism personally. Another mechanism is to identify stressors at work. Focus on the important tasks and accept that you do not have to reach perfection with every task. Being proactive and planning ahead for problems that may arise will help you deal with stress in a better way. It is essential to instill in the staff that their efforts in technical services

will help the library to attain it's goals (Leung 1984).

Haack, Jones, and Roose studied burnout among librarians. A Staff Burnout Scale Questionnaire with thirty questions was used in a survey.

There were ninety-two subjects attending a conference on reference service given by the Illinois Association of College and Research Libraries. Mary Haack discussed the issue of burnout. Following her presentation, Tina Roose asked people to participate in the study and 42% of the respondents indicated that they were burned out or almost burned out (Haack, Jones, and Roose 1984).

Respondents were also asked to draw pictures of their level of burnout. The drawings revealed the different stages of burnout. The stages of burnout consist of high enthusiasm, stagnation, frustration, and apathy (Haack, Jones, and Roose 1984). Some drawings were abstract and revealed the last stages of burnout. Librarians who were burned out expressed problems with their physical well being, their co-workers, and their interest in taking medication to deal with stress.

The survey revealed that there are many sources of stress, with some coming from co-workers, managers, and patrons. Haack, Jones, and Roose explained that training in communication and stress management was necessary to help employees with this problem. Suggestions for further study included replicating this study with a larger group of

librarians. People who are more susceptible to burnout should be identified. Additional sources of stress should be identified, as well as more efficient stress management techniques.

Clark and Kalin (1996) explain how to cope with technostress. Librarians experience this when working with technology. People thought technology would assist them, but it has increased people's work load and pace in which they complete their work. It is essential that administrators give notice to their employees if they will be getting new computers and software in their library.

Training is another factor administrators must provide to their employees as well as to provide encouragement to staff who are apprehensive to learn new technology. Employees need to be aware that technology is a part of their job and that it will be essential to their position. Training should be provided in a timely manner. Administrators must provide enough practice time for their employees to learn new technology and should recognize the efforts of employees who have mastered the new technology (Clark and Kalin 1996).

Managers must plan for upgrading technology in their budgets. Patrons will be unhappy if computers in the library are not upgraded and do not have support. Ergonomically designed work stations and chairs should be provided to help employees feel comfortable when using

computers; it can help lessen the chance of employees being prone to symptoms associated with using computers for extended amounts of time (Clark and Kalin 1996).

Monica Ollendorff studied stress management among librarians. The purpose of the study was to determine what librarians know about stress management and how librarians deal with stress.

The survey method was used and a questionnaire was used as the instrument. The subjects were all professional librarians at Kent State University; 72% of the respondents thought they knew something about stress management. Among the other findings were that 82% of the respondents wanted to know more about stress management and 66% said they practiced the stress management techniques they had learned on a regular basis.

Ollendorff had a question asking the respondents how they dealt with stress and the responses were put into the following areas: destructive behavior, constructive behavior, and destructive attitudes (1989). Destructive attitudes were chosen the most for handling stress. The majority (89%) of the respondents thought stress management should be included in staff development programs.

Ollendorff recommended that the study be repeated and relationships between the factors in this study such as age, sex, or years of service be

analyzed (1989). She suggested that this survey could be used before a stress management training program was given and also a few months after for the purpose of examining differences in scores (Ollendorff 1989).

Lynch and Verdin (1983) studied job satisfaction in the work environment. The relationship between job satisfaction and different factors such as the employee's department, the level of the employment (such as professional or paraprofessional), sex, age, and tenure were examined.

The survey method was used and a questionnaire was used as the data collecting instrument. Full-time employees working in academic libraries participated in this survey. The employees were from all the different areas of the academic library. In the questionnaire Lynch and Verdin used a job satisfaction scale created by Jerald Hage and Michael Aiken, consisting of questions about past positions as compared to their present position, the accomplishment of their goals, expectations for their present position, and career objectives.

The survey revealed that there was not a substantial difference between male and female workers, but that there was a relationship between job satisfaction and age (Lynch and Verdin 1983). The youngest respondents, ages twenty-five years and under, were the least satisfied.

Years of work experience also was related to job satisfaction. The survey revealed that the respondents with the lowest job satisfaction had three to four years experience in libraries. Respondents that were committed to stay at their present position were more satisfied than those that wanted to move on to another library. Those who headed departments were more satisfied than those respondents in lower level positions of a department. The highest level of job satisfaction came from employees working in the reference department and the acquisitions department. Professional librarians reported higher job satisfaction than paraprofessional librarians.

Recommendations for further study were that librarians just beginning their career should be studied to discover the reasons for their low level of job satisfaction. More studies in career commitment, job design, and the changes in library work would be helpful to understand the differences in job satisfaction among employees working in the same library (Lynch and Verdin 1983).

Plate and Stone (1974) studied job satisfaction. Herzberg's motivation and hygiene factors were applied and tested in this study. The purpose of this study was to test the validity of these two factors with regards to job satisfaction. The group interview method was used in this study. Participants were asked when they could remember feeling good

and bad on the job and the reason for these feelings.

The method used was group interviews and the instrument used was a schedule of questions. The sample consisted of 200 American librarians and ninety-nine Canadian librarians. Both the American and Canadian librarians were from all different types of libraries. Most of the Canadian librarians held management positions.

The study revealed that motivational factors brought satisfaction to workers, while hygiene factors brought dissatisfaction to workers just as they had in Herzberg's studies. Factors that bring satisfaction to employees are related to the content of the job, while the factors bringing dissatisfaction are related to where the job is done which is the work environment. Achievement and recognition promoted the most satisfaction for both the American and Canadian librarians. Many of the librarians, both Americans and Canadians, attributed their satisfaction to having responsibility and being permitted to take part in the management process. Policies of the library or institution and management were related to bringing the most dissatisfaction to the job for both groups of librarians. No recommendations for further study was given. These findings reveal that Herzberg's theory on motivation and hygiene factors apply to librarianship just as they relate to other fields Herzberg analyzed (Plate and Stone 1974).

CHAPTER III.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was used for this study. The sample was a purposive one, since reference librarians were specifically chosen to participate in this study. Libraries of different sizes were selected, as well as a variety of different community types served - such as rural and urban. Libraries serving a homogeneous community and those serving a culturally diverse community were selected for the study. Also, libraries that serve wealthy communities and those serving poor communities were selected for the study.

The cover letters (see Appendix A) and questionnaires (see Appendix B) were distributed to public libraries located in Lake, Cuyahoga, and Geauga counties. The directors were asked if the cover letters and questionnaires could be left in an area that reference librarians would have access to, such as the staff lounge. These items were returned to a box. The box, marked Reference Survey, was sealed and had a slot for envelopes. There should not have been any tampering with the box, since the box was sealed. When the reference librarians completed their surveys, the cover letter instructed them to place the questionnaire into the envelope provided, seal it, and place the envelope in the box. Since the

questionnaire is anonymous and envelopes were provided, reference librarians should have felt secure enough to provide honest responses to the questionnaire. The completed questionnaires from the various libraries were picked up in a month.

The data collected from the questionnaires were used to determine percentages and frequencies for the study which were presented in tables. Some of the data collected was subjected to chi square analysis to determine whether relationships existed between variables.

CHAPTER IV.

FINDINGS

A total of 101 usable questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 72%. The survey used dealt with a number of factors related to stress, stress management, and job satisfaction. Of the respondents 83.2% were females and 16.8% were males. Table one illustrates that the majority of the respondents had seven or less years of experience working in the reference department.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Years of Service in the Reference Department

Years of Service	f	%
0 - 7	57	56.4
8 -15	20	19.8
16 - 23	10	9.9
24 - 31	11	10.9
32 +	3	3.0
Total	101	100.0

Table two shows that the majority of the respondents held a Master's Degree. Three respondents indicated that they had a Bachelor's Degree and some additional college beyond that degree. One respondent indicated he had a Master's Degree in Science.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Educational Background

Education	f	%
High School Diploma	1	1.0
Some College	1	1.0
Associate's Degree	0	0
Bachelor's Degree	38	37.6
Master's Degree	59	58.4
Doctoral Degree	2	2.0
Total	101	100.0

Of the respondents 66.3% were full-time and 33.7% were part-time. Two respondents commented that they enjoy working part-time.

Table three illustrates that patrons caused the most stress to the respondents surveyed, followed by work load. Many of the respondents chose the other option to represent their stress factors. Three respondents said technology and the Internet caused them the most stress. Another three respondents said they felt stress when they were busy and had little time to answer reference questions. One respondent said she felt stressed when working night hours during the winter. Some other causes of stress were the small size of the library and the use of both the Library of Congress and the Dewey Decimal Classification systems in one library.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Stress Factors

Stress Factors	f		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Salary/Benefits	15	86	14.9	85.1
Work Load	29	72	28.7	71.3
Patrons	36	65	35.6	64.4
Co-workers	16	85	15.8	84.2
Supervisor(s)	12	89	11.9	88.1
Schedule	13	88	12.9	87.1
Other	13	88	12.9	87.1

A large majority (97%) of the respondents felt their patrons appreciated their work. Table four illustrates that the majority of the reference librarians answered six to ten questions per hour. Table five illustrates that the largest category of the respondents spend three to four hours per day working at the reference desk.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Hours per Day at the Reference Desk

Reference Questions per Hour	f	%
0 - 5	20	19.8
6 - 10	49	48.5
11-15	22	21.8
16 +	10	9.9
Total	101	100.0

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Hours per Day at the Reference Desk

Desk Hours per Day	f	%
1 - 2	8	7.9
3 - 4	37	36.6
5 - 6	25	24.8
7 - 8	30	29.7
9 +	1	1.0
Total	101	100.0

Table six illustrates additional duties of reference librarians; the leading additional duty was patron instruction, followed by selecting books, reading reviews, and reader's advisory.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Additional Duties

Additional Duties	f		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Reading Reviews	76	25	75.2	24.8
Selecting Books	87	14	86.1	13.9
Program Planning	47	54	46.5	53.5
Preparing Displays	43	58	42.6	57.4
Patron Instruction	95	6	94.1	5.9
Reader's Advisory	68	33	67.3	32.7
Maintenance of Computers	57	44	56.4	43.6
Training and Supervising	36	65	35.6	64.4
Technical Services	15	86	14.9	85.1
Writing Book Reviews	19	82	18.8	81.2

When asked if they felt their work load was challenging, 48.5% of the respondents considered their work load to be somewhat challenging, 45.5% considered their work very challenging, and 5.9% did not consider their work load to be challenging. A total of 70.3% of the respondents work at libraries in suburban communities; 75.2% of the respondents serve a culturally diverse community and 24.8% do not. An overwhelming 99% of the respondents were provided with training on new technology.

Table seven illustrates that 39.6% of the respondents had staff meetings on an irregular basis and 34.7% had staff meetings once a month. There were many respondents (20.8%) that chose the option other to represent the frequency of their staff meetings. Thirteen respondents (12.9%) said they had meetings as they were needed. Sixteen respondents (15.8%) said they seldom had meetings with the time periods ranging from two to six months per year. Four respondents (4%) said they almost never have meetings and nine respondents (9%) said they never have staff meetings. One respondent said they have good communication systems and do not have staff meetings, but did not provide any details on these systems. Another respondent said his or her library does not have staff meetings, but instead read minutes (the respondent may have meant the board meeting minutes).

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Staff Meetings

Frequency of Staff Meetings	f	%
Every Week	0	0
Twice a Month	5	5.0
Once a Month	35	34.7
On an Irregular Basis	40	39.6
Other	21	20.8
Total	101	100.1

Table eight illustrates 61.4% of the respondents had one supervisor

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Number of Supervisors

Number of Supervisors	f	%
One	62	61.4
Two	27	26.7
Three	10	9.9
More than Three	2	2.0
Total	101	100.0

Ninety-seven percent of the respondents said they had a good relationship with their supervisor; 98% are permitted to provide input in their department.

Table nine illustrates that 44.6% of the respondents read to relieve their stress, followed by 32.7% who use exercise to relieve stress. There were many respondents that chose the option other to represent what they do to relieve stress. Some of the ways the respondents relieve stress are: outside activities, listening to music, watching television, spending time with their family, performing religious exercises, socializing, relaxing at home, and taking breaks at work. Some of the respondents relieved their stress in less positive ways. These activities included: "swear under my breath" and "drink and smoke." Some of the respondents said they did not relieve stress very well or they have no time to relieve it.

Table 9

Frequency Distribution of Stress Relief

Stress Relief	f		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Exercise	33	68	32.7	67.3
Hobby	17	84	16.8	83.2
Read	45	56	44.6	55.4
Meditate	3	98	3.0	97.0
Other	12	89	11.9	88.1

A total of 53.5% of the respondents said their library does not provide stress management services, while 46.5% of the libraries do provide these services. There were many respondents who wrote in the types of stress management services that their library offers. Some of the services were: a workshop on stress management, two free visits with a psychologist, and having a massotherapist attend a staff meeting. One respondent indicated that her library had a program called Cope available through the Human Resource department of the library, but employees had to pay if they participated in the program. Another respondent said her library provided newsletters on this topic, but that these were not much help. Four respondents stated that their library has a program called EASE

(Employment Assistance Program). The program provides confidential assistance to employees. To participate employees must call 1-800-521-EASE.

Table ten illustrates that answering reference questions provides the most job satisfaction, followed by doing collection development work. Many of the respondents chose the other option to represent their idea of job satisfaction. Three respondents (3%) said they get job satisfaction from supervising other staff members and another three respondents (3%) thought their satisfaction came from interaction with patrons. One respondent thought cataloging was satisfying and another respondent thought solving cataloging and information retrieval problems was satisfying. One respondent enjoyed working with Friends of the Library groups, while another enjoyed planning and giving programs. Another respondent enjoyed designing the covers for library publications. One respondent said he or she does not experience any job satisfaction.

Table 10

Frequency Distribution of Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction	f		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Reference Questions	57	44	56.4	43.6
Collection Development	20	81	19.8	80.2
Program Planning	10	91	9.9	90.1
Reader's Advisory	5	96	5.0	95.0
Other	13	88	12.9	87.1

When asked if they would choose reference work again if just beginning their career 76.2% of the respondents said they would while 19.8% of the respondents would not choose this career again, and 4% of the respondents were undecided.

The questionnaire provided opportunity for respondents to make additional comments. Six respondents (6%) commented on the benefits of helping patrons, while one respondent (1%) commented on the stress caused by patrons. Technology has brought more demands to reference work, as it was cited by four respondents (4%) to be a source of stress. Another four respondents (4%) commented that the earning potential for librarians is low. Three respondents (3%) stated that their co-workers

were an asset that helped enhance their work environment and made the work more manageable. Five respondents (5%) enjoyed the busy pace of reference work, with one of these respondents stating "I find it invigorating." Three respondents (3%) commented that they enjoy reference work in general. One respondent stated that people skills are an important part of the job. Another respondent said she preferred cataloging to reference work. A few respondents said the work is stressful and that there are not enough staff to handle the volume of questions.

A chi square analysis was conducted to determine whether job satisfaction was related to the other variables in the study. The resulting analysis revealed that job satisfaction was independent of or not significantly related to the following variables: gender (chi square = 0.047, $p = 0.828$); employment (chi square = 0.119, $p = 0.730$); community (chi square = 3.282, $p = 0.194$), supervisor (chi square = 1.957, $p = 0.581$); staff meeting (chi square = 2.903, $p = 0.407$), and work load (chi square = 0.333, $p = 0.847$).

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION

There is a unique relationship between librarians and patrons. Librarians (35.6%) in the survey revealed that patrons cause the most stress, yet 56.4% of the respondents felt the most job satisfaction from answering reference questions. These responses reveal that patron interaction contributes to most librarian's stress, but the satisfaction gained from answering questions somehow balances the negative aspects of the relationship between the librarian and the patron. Of the respondents 97% felt patrons appreciated their help. If more stress management services were provided, this relationship between librarians and patrons could be enhanced.

Reader's Advisory brought the least amount of job satisfaction to the respondents, followed by program planning. These duties should be looked at by supervisors to find out how the librarians can receive more job satisfaction from performing these duties.

Supervisors caused the least amount of stress for the respondents, which is quite different from many other work environments. Also, 97% amount of the respondents had a good relationship with their supervisor.

This positive relationship can help relieve stress and also help with job satisfaction. This survey also revealed that 61.4% of the respondents had one supervisor.

Some of the respondents shared their feelings, both good and bad about this type of work. For example, "many staff members suffer from stress - induced problems - headaches, ulcers, colitis, etc. - including myself." This statement emphasizes the problem for employees in libraries today. Of the respondents 99% said their library does provide training on new technology which can help librarians experience less stress. One of the stress management services listed, Cope, indicated that employees had to pay to participate in the program. Employers must address these problems if they want to help and retain their workers.

With regards to relieving stress, 44.6% of the respondents said they relieved stress by reading. Meditation was rated low as a way to relieve stress. Training in this area of stress management should be made available for staff members, because of its healing effects. The percentage of libraries providing stress management was almost equal to the percentage of libraries that do not provide such services. It is important that employers offer these services and let their staff know that such services are available to them. Librarians that are offered these services would be more likely to stay at their present position, as it

would be an attractive benefit.

This survey showed that 98% of the respondents are permitted to provide input. This factor promotes a good relationship between the supervisor and the employee.

Since the majority (76.2%) of the librarians said they would choose this type of work again, one can only conclude that job satisfaction outweighs the stress.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study should be replicated and a larger sample of librarians should be surveyed; this would increase the validity of these findings and it would help discover new findings on stress, stress management, and job satisfaction. Testing a sample of respondents in the middle of their career and a sample at the end of their career would be beneficial, since the majority of the respondents in this study were beginning their careers.

APPENDIX A

School of Library and Information Science
(330) 672-2782
Fax (330) 672-7965

Kent STATE UNIVERSITY
P. O. Box 5190, Kent, Ohio 44242-0001

Re: AN ANALYSIS OF STRESS ASSOCIATED WITH REFERENCE WORK IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY

July 14, 1997

Dear Reference Librarian:

I am a graduate student in the School of Library and Information Science at Kent State University. As part of the requirements for my master's degree, I am conducting a study about the stress that reference librarians experience while working in a public library. I am requesting, through this questionnaire, information to help identify sources of stress and learn how librarians manage stress; I am also trying to gauge job satisfaction as it relates to stress. This information would be useful to both theorists and practitioners in the field of library and information science.

Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed as you do not need to sign your name to individual questionnaires; only the investigator has access to the survey data. There is no penalty of any kind if you would withdraw from participation at any time. While your cooperation is essential to the success of this study, it is, of course, voluntary. A copy of the results of the study will be available upon request.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at (216) 357-7319 or Dr. Lois Buttlar, my research advisor, at (330) 672-2782. If you have any further questions regarding research at Kent State University you may contact Dr. M. Thomas Jones, Office of Research and Graduate Studies, at (330) 672-2851.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. You may place the questionnaire in the envelope provided and seal it; return it to the box marked Reference Survey.

Sincerely,

Holly Carter Ferkol

Holly Carter Ferkol
Graduate Student

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX B

AN ANALYSIS OF STRESS WITH REFERENCE WORK IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY

Please choose one answer for each question, unless otherwise instructed.

1. ❑ Male ❑ Female

2. How many years have you worked in the reference department of your library?
   a. 0-7
   b. 8-15
   c. 16-23
   d. 24-31
   e. 32 +

3. What is your educational background?
   a. High School Diploma
   b. Some College
   c. Associate's Degree
   d. Bachelor's Degree
   e. Master's Degree
   f. Doctoral Degree

4. Employment Status: ❑ Full-time ❑ Part-time

5. Which of the following factors causes you the most stress?
   a. Salary/Benefits
   b. Work Load
   c. Patrons
   d. Co-workers
   e. Supervisor(s)
   f. Schedule
   g. Other_____

6. Do you feel your work is appreciated by patrons?
   ❑ Yes ❑ No

7. How many reference questions do you answer in an hour?
   a. 0-5
   b. 6-10
   c. 11-15
   d. 16 +

8. How many hours do you spend working at the reference desk in a day?
   a. 1-2
   b. 3-4
   c. 5-6
   d. 7-8
   e. 9 +

9. Besides answering reference questions, please check off any additional duties you have.

- ❑ Reading Reviews
- ❑ Selecting Books
- ❑ Program Planning
- ❑ Preparing Displays/Exhibits
- ❑ Patron Instruction
- ❑ Reader's Advisory
- ❑ Maintenance of Computer Printers or Copy Machines
- ❑ Training and Supervising of Staff
- ❑ Technical Services
- ❑ Writing Book Reviews or Newsletters

10. How would your describe your work load?

a. Not Challenging
b. Somewhat Challenging
c. Very Challenging

11. How would you describe the community in which your library is located?

a. Urban
b. Suburban
c. Rural

12. Does your library serve a culturally diverse community?

❑ Yes ❑ No

13. Does your library provide you with training on new technology used in the library?

❑ Yes ❑ No

14. How often does your department have staff meetings?

a. Every Week
b. Twice a Month
c. Once a Month
d. On an Irregular Basis (Please specify)
e. Other_____

15. How many supervisors do you report to in the administrative hierarchy?

a. One
b. Two
c. Three
d. More than Three

16. Do you have a good working relationship with your supervisor(s)?

❑ Yes ❑ No

17. Are you permitted to provide input to decision making that will have an effect on your department?

❑ Yes ❑ No

18. How do you relieve your stress? (Only choose one)
    a. Exercise
    b. Hobby
    c. Read
    d. Meditate
    e. Other_____

19. Does your library provide stress management services for staff?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

20. What task provides you with the most job satisfaction? (Only choose one)
    a. Answering Reference Questions
    b. Collection Development
    c. Program Planning
    d. Reader's Advisory
    e. Other_____

21. If you were beginning your career today, would you choose reference work in a public library?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

22. If you have any additional comments, please use the space provided.

_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your cooperation. Place the questionnaire in the envelope provided and please seal it. Please return the questionnaire to the box marked Reference Survey.

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